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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 KABUL 001898

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SUBJECT: CODEL REED'S JULY 20 DISCUSSIONS WITH KARZAI

Classified By: Ambassador William B. Wood, for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: During the CODEL,s July 20 office call and subsequent working lunch with President Karzai, Senator Obama reaffirmed both major American political parties, long-term commitment to Afghanistan. He emphasized the Afghan leadership,s obligation to demonstrate determination in fighting corruption and stemming narcotics production. He stressed the USG,s interest in re-establishing a working relationship between the IROA and the Pakistani government. Karzai promised that, if Pakistan were to abandon the practice of "using Islamic radicalism as an instrument of policy," it would find "a true friend and ally" in Afghanistan. Karzai spoke well of the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), but complained the Inter-Services Intelligence Directorate (ISI) and military are not granting Prime Minister Gilani latitude to govern. He argued USG pressure is essential to establishing Pakistani civilian control over ISI and the military.

Karzai,s Pakistan Problem  
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¶2. (C) After noting his recent visit to a village in Nangarhar to address a civilian casualty controversy, Karzai painted Pakistan as the source of increasing instability in Afghanistan. He revisited that theme throughout the meeting and lunch, twice urging U.S. military operations in Pakistan. Obama expressed his concern but also encouraged Karzai to work with the Pakistani government to curb lawlessness along the common border. Karzai claimed Musharraf had apologized for Pakistan,s mistakes in its Afghanistan policy during their initial February 2002 meeting; however, to Karzai,s surprise, in their next meeting, Musharraf demanded Afghanistan close India,s consulates and downgrade ties. Karzai refused, but promised Musharraf no one would ever use Afghanistan as a base against Pakistan.

¶3. (C) Karzai described as "very disappointing" Pakistani Prime Minister Gilani,s televised address of the night before to his people on terrorism. Karzai attributed the "bad speech" to the ISI and Pakistani military, which, he explained, are not granting Gilani the latitude to govern. Both, Karzai said, must be brought under civilian control. Senator Hagel asked if the Pakistani government had the ability to assert its authority over the military and intelligence services. Karzai replied: "No, not without the help of the U.S." The Saudis might also have some influence, he mused, but "we believe you are the key." Hagel inquired

about specific steps. Karzai specified three: The USG should inform the Pakistanis that it is aware of their meddling in Afghanistan; insist the Pakistanis cease "using radical Islam as an instrument of policy," and; deliver an ultimatum "as you did in 2001," that the Pakistanis can be either with the United States or against it. "Softly, softly, won't work," Karzai concluded. Hagel asked if the USG should condition its aid to Pakistan. Karzai replied "yes," but advised that the USG make clear simultaneously its support for the PPP. Obama asked if the PPP's problem is "lack of capacity." Karzai did not relent: "The problem is the ISI and the military, which runs the country" and its nuclear program and its destabilization effort in Afghanistan.

14. (C) Obama asked if Afghans are susceptible to Islamists, anti-Western messages. Karzai implied that, absent Pakistan's intervention, the Taliban message would not have gained traction with Afghanistan's Pashtuns. "Over three decades," he charged, "thousands of Afghan boys were indoctrinated into hatefulness disguised as Islam." Obama asked what counter-message is being delivered in Afghan mosque sermons? "Terrorism is the enemy of the people," Karzai replied. He noted that the Taliban are killing older Afghan clergy who are being replaced by younger, Pakistani-trained mullahs.

The Progress We've Achieved Promises More  
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15. (SBU) Karzai lamented that Americans are not hearing more

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about the success of their investment in Afghanistan. He recited a list of accomplishments since the ouster of the Taliban: six million children now enrolled in school, 30 percent of those girls; Afghan hospitals now capable of performing heart and brain surgeries; development projects in over half of 38,000 villages; sharply reduced infant and child mortality rates. "The Army is doing well," he said, though the police force is inadequate. "We should focus on electricity."

16. (SBU) Obama agreed the partnership between the world community and the Afghan people had achieved a great deal, but said, "We still have a lot of work to do." He promised that, regardless of the outcome of the November elections, "both parties are making a long-term commitment" to Afghanistan. The key to locking in that support, he emphasized, is a clear indication of the Afghan government's determination to fight corruption and narcotics. I know, Obama said, "it's tough to change cultures," but leadership is obliged to send "a signal from the top" that these activities will not be tolerated.

17. (SBU) Karzai said suppression of the poppy economy required three things: a well-conceived eradication plan; alternative livelihoods and "hope for the future." Elaborating on the last, he said, "poppies are the result of desperation." During the war, people had uprooted their orchards and replaced them with poppies because opium yields a more reliable income. Obama interjected: "I'd add we need enforcement, prosecution of traffickers."

18. (SBU) Turning to corruption, Karzai admitted that, for a long time, his government had not understood corruption. A governmental inquiry, led by the chief justice, had studied the phenomenon in all its manifestations from counterfeit medicines to petty bribes. That inquiry had yielded a bill Karzai would send to the parliament seeking the creation of an FBI-like office with the authority to investigate and arrest suspected corrupt officials.

Elections Security; Get It and They Will Come  
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¶9. (SBU) Obama inquired about preparations for the autumn 2009 presidential elections. Karzai reviewed the decision on splitting parliamentary and presidential elections. He said the Afghan Independent Election Commission (IEC) had begun to assemble infrastructure to support elections. His only reservation is security: "We need security." If we have it, he said, the voters "will come in their millions." Obama relayed his belief that deployed U.S. military are committed to securing the elections in cooperation with the Afghan National Security Forces and ISAF.

Iran; Not the Best of Neighbors  
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¶10. (C) Obama and Hagel solicited Karzai's opinion of Afghanistan's western neighbor. Karzai began his reply by saying we try to engage them, talk to them; however, the current Iranian regime "suspects our relationship with you." Obama asked if the Iranians had caused problems for Afghanistan. "Yes," Karzai replied, "we've confirmed reports they supplied weapons to the Taliban." National Directorate for Security (NDS) chief Saleh added that, three weeks ago, NDS had arrested "an agent of the Iranian consulate in Kandahar" who had been training the Taliban in the use of landmines.

Attendees  
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¶11. (U) American side:

Senator Jack Reed  
Senator Chuck Hagel  
Senator Barack Obama  
Ambassador Wood  
Deputy Chief of Mission Christopher Dell  
Anthony Blinken, Staff Director - SFRC

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Elizabeth King, Military Legislative Assistant  
Rexon Ryu, Senior Foreign Policy Advisor  
Mark Lippert, Foreign Policy Advisor  
Jeremiah Howard, A/Political Counselor (Note-taker)

Afghan side:

President Karzai  
Ahmad Zia Massoud, First Vice President  
Mohammad Karim Khalili, Second Vice President  
Hedayat Amin Arsala, Senior Advisor to the President  
Rangin Dadfur Spanta, Minister of Foreign Affairs  
Abdul Rahim Wardak, Minister of Defense  
Zalmai Rassoul, National Security Advisor  
Amrullah Saleh, General Director National Security  
Taj Ayubi, Minister Advisor of International Relations  
Humira Itemade, Deputy Chief of Staff  
Humayon Hamidzada, Presidential Spokesman  
Nazar Hasin Rahimi, Special Secretary

¶12. (U) The CODEL did not have an opportunity to clear this cable.

WOOD